

Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project
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Arielle Labra
Artist
Caterer, Westerly
Packaging Support, University of Washington Bookstore

Narrator: Arielle Labra

Interviewers: Wendi Zhou

Subjects: Pandemic, mental health, social distancing, shopping, wearing masks, fear, working during pandemic, working online

Location: Zoom Interview (Seattle Washington)

Date: 01/17/2021

Interview Length: 00:46:19

File Name: LabraArielle_2021_C19_Video_Interview_Completed

WENDI ZHOU 00:00:16

Hello Arielle, and thank you again for taking the time to speak with me about your experiences. This is Wendi Zhou, interviewing Arielle Labra on Monday, December 27, 2021 for the Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project. This is a remote interview, and I am in Miami, Florida, and Arielle is in Seattle, Washington. So first of all, let's start with your name. So what is your name? And can you please spell out your first and last name?

ARIELLE LABRA 00:00:51

Okay, I'm Arielle Labra. Arielle is A-R-I-E-L-L-E, and Labra is: L-A-B-R-A

WENDI 00:01:04

Thank you. And how old are you?

ARIELLE 00:01:09

I'm 23 years old.

WENDI 00:01:10

What is your birth date?

ARIELLE 00:01:13

Um, I was born January 1 of 1998.

WENDI 00:01:17

And where—where were you born?

ARIELLE 00:01:20

I was born in Zimbabwe, Africa.

WENDI 00:01:24

What gender if any, do you identify as and what are your pronouns?

ARIELLE 00:01:28

My pronouns are she/her/they/them. I identify this gender fluid.

WENDI 00:01:35

What race or ethnicity do you identify as and how important is your racial and ethnic background to you?

ARIELLE 00:01:42

I identify as Latina. And it's something that I still try— I'm trying to figure out. Now—now, other days, I find it more important. I feel more close to my Latino background, but it's still something that I'm trying to figure out.

WENDI 00:01:59

And can you talk about what social, political, ethnic, racial or religious communities you regularly connect with or participate in?

ARIELLE 00:02:08

I don't participate in any.

WENDI 00:02:11

And where do you live now?

ARIELLE 00:02:14

Well, now I live in Seattle, Washington in Beacon Hill.

WENDI 00:02:19

Alright, and now let's move on to questions about occupational information. So what is your occupation or profession?

ARIELLE 00:02:27

Well, I'm an artist, although I do have a couple of side gigs. Right now I'm working in a catering company and I'm also packaging books at the UW [University of Washington] bookstore.

WENDI 00:02:42

Are you a member of a union?

ARIELLE 00:02:44

No.

WENDI 00:02:47

Okay. Can we— can you run me through a typical day at work before the pandemic, from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed, and this doesn't have to be like, only at work, Just please run me through a day in your life just before the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:03:03

Um, well, of course, it felt like, it felt way more simple, because well, now I have all this like mental checklist I have in my brain. It's like, oh, yeah, I have my sanitizer. I have my mask with me, okay, like, let's do this. And in the past, just like, wake up, take my time. Sometimes I'll have breakfast, sometimes not, depending if I woke up with enough time or not. And it felt, well I said, I felt more calm and now I feel I didn't have so many things to be aware of. Whereas now I'm like constantly thinking and overthinking. Like oh, do I have a mask? How long [?Inaudible ?] have I been wearing this mask for I should wash probably or like, do I have sanitizer with me? So I don't know maybe now I feel way more self conscious of me and my surroundings. Whereas before COVID I just literally didn't really care. (*chuckles*)

WENDI 00:04:04

Were you designated a frontline or an essential worker by the Washington governor's stay home stay healthy order?

ARIELLE 00:04:11

Yes, during COVID I was working at PCC [Puget Consumers Co-op]. So, I was part of the essential workers.

WENDI 00:04:19

And how is your work been impacted or disrupted by the pandemic?

Well, it changed quite a bit. It's interesting cause I feel like before the pandemic, when people talk about like, grocery folks, they will feel like oh yeah, grocery folks "like ugh they're just like people who work in a grocery" and now it's like "no, they're saviors essential workers we couldn't do without them". So like on one aspect that like now we're like superheroes or something. And then it became it started, like, things started to be more difficult like as I said before, in the last question, like I have my I have to be worth more things now. Because now like with all the masks, I was like, Okay, I'm having my— wore my masks, but now I have to work with next to this person. And we're not really social distancing. So we're not really like, following the guidelines, but still like I have to work. Like we don't have a lot of time space over here. So like it was, I don't know, like, there was a lot of things to take an account and like, oh, there's someone who came into the store with a little mask. Like that's not really my job to tell someone, "please wear mask", but still I feel uncomfortable with that. And I don't know also, I felt like I had more work to do not only like the mental work of like, oh, yeah, I have to work my mask and all this coworkers next to me, there's not a ton of space for us to work in. But also, I feel like I have way more work work to do. I worked in the deli, a PCC. And I was feeling that I was doing the job of two or three people sometimes, and I will get home exhausted. I've never felt so tired in my life after a shift (*chuckles*) in when I worked at grocery. Yeah, it was quite intense.

WENDI 00:06:06

Yeah. And did you ever feel in danger or that your health was threatened on the job as a result of the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:06:15

I'm not really not really, cause I don't know I try to. I try. And I try to keep trying to really be responsible and be safe. I would only take my mask off if I was really alone. Like there was no one around me. like I always tried to take my own precautions, because I didn't really trust the management. I don't— I don't really trust any

management and how— how every country are dealing with the COVID I'm like, no smells. Again, I'm not trusting anybody. I'm just gonna do my thing. So yeah.

WENDI 00:06:52

Yeah. So did your employer provide personal protective equipment?

ARIELLE 00:06:56

Yeah, they did give us masks and well, they also made a sacred temperatures and whatnot.

WENDI 00:07:05

And did you receive hazard pay as a result of the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:07:09

Yes, but not immediately. Like, actually, we had to kind of fight for it. Because PCC wasn't really giving in at the beginning. And then they were like, okay, we're gonna raise. We're gonna give you a \$4 hazard pay. Yay! (*Chuckles*).

WENDI 00:07:27

Yeah. So can you tell me more about your experience trying to fight for this hazard pay from your employer.

ARIELLE 00:07:38

Well, I, it was infuriating honestly. [*?inaudible?*] In the end, we're the ones who are putting your lives on the line with all this money about [*?inaudible?*] taking care of and everything. But in the end, we're the ones who are there in the frontlines. So it was really infuriating when at the beginning, when the ex CEO, the CEO at the time was like, oh, no, PCC is just a small Co Op, we can't afford to hazard pay to all our employees, it was like excuse, honestly, something that really helped the fire was a lot of customers reached out. And we're like, this is not okay. Like, you're not really thinking about [*?Inaudible ?*] right now. Like they need they. It's not fair. And it wasn't, it didn't take a lot of time. It didn't take a lot of time. And I honestly think that it didn't take so much time for the company to chip in. But if not, I don't know, I remember like the people from the Union were coming really frequently into the store talking to us, like asking you the same questions like how this is me feel like what can we do? And I feel like it was like, kind of two weeks, a two week process until the company will say, Yeah, sure. We're gonna give them hazard paid. Customers threaten us with(*audio cuts off*) that. So yeah, it was really stressful. I don't know. I didn't, I didn't feel safe. I was like, if they don't really care about us, like I didn't feel cared for.

WENDI 00:09:21

Yeah, and earlier you spoke about, like, grocery workers were suddenly treated as if they were heroes, like all these frontline workers are heroes.

ARIELLE 00:09:31

Yeah.

WENDI 00:09:32

Would you agree with that or disagree or what do you think?

ARIELLE 00:09:35

I mean, I Well, I think that grocery workers have always been essential. Just like now we're looking at them with a different lens, like a different perspective. Um, I do appreciate to deeply appreciate and people that are still working groceries, I just couldn't do it anymore. It was not good for my health. But um, I do respect them

quite a bit. And I do think they're kind of superheroes because it's it takes a lot. It takes a lot not not only like physical energy, but a lot of mental energy to be in a grocery store working this times.

WENDI 00:10:19

Did you access any government or community support due to the virus?

ARIELLE 00:10:25

Um, yes, I did get some unemployment benefits.

WENDI 00:10:30

So what was your experience? Like getting the unemployment benefits? And Did you face any challenges in the process?

ARIELLE 00:10:39

Well, I did face some challenges, cause in the beginning, my unemployment benefits were not accepted. And then the it went through, like, it was kinda like, the tough, I was a little bit tough to get through it, to actually make it work. Currently, I'm not receiving unemployment benefits anymore. But I did receive quite a bit chunk, especially towards the beginning of the pandemic, it's when I received more help from my unemployment benefits. Um, but yeah, it was really helpful. But it was kind of hard because I said, like, in the beginning, they didn't accept it until they did and it took me a minute to get it going.

WENDI 00:11:20

All right. Now, can you walk me through a typical day in your life during the pandemic, from the time you wake up to the time we go to sleep?

ARIELLE 00:11:29

Um, well, now that it's cold the— the first thing I do is I check how cold it's outside or if it's going to rain. (*chuckles*) Um, and I feel like. It takes me like 10 minutes to leave my house, because it's like, I have to grab my jacket. And then I'm like, Oh, I have my shoes on. It's like, I have my mask. Yes, I have my mask. And well, I don't drive. So I have to check the bus schedule. And I'm checking the bus schedule and I'm like, oh, yeah, my wallet with me. Yeah, I have my wallet. And my mask. Yes. And I feel like now I'm really used to like now if I don't see someone with a mask, and I just see their faces. I'm really uncomfortable. But now I don't know I even I am even kind of grateful for the mask situation because now it's so cool to accuse my face warm. But yeah, I just go out, although not all the time, because I've mainly worked from home, but the days that I do go out for my other gigs. It just feels like um, what's the word? I'm just, I don't know, I'm just going to— go do my thing. I don't really, in the past, I feel like I would like stop in different shops and whatnot, and maybe like, hang out or like ask somebody to hang out. But now it just like go out. I go to work, and I come back. Or like even if I don't go to work and I have to go somewhere. I just plan to go to that place. And then I come back. I don't really I don't I don't really I don't feel it really feel as much liberty or freedom as before. And also because I want to be safe and responsible. I don't wanna I don't want to really get COVID or get anybody COVID so yeah, it's way more planned. I feel like my life is way more planned now with COVID.

WENDI 00:13:21

Yeah, and he raised the issue of like mask wearing very frequently or and I was I wanted know, like, in what ways do you or your social circle wear masks are practice social distancing— practice social distancing, or other strategy— other strategies during the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:13:44

Well, for once well it depends if it's like my close friends or like my family. I really don't wear masks around them and they don't work masks around me because I don't know. It's the close circle. We know each other. I know where they've been. And I know where they want to – the day before or something so with them, it's kind of more flexible. But I do when I do approach a new group of people I always ask like, Oh, do you feel comfortable if I have my mask on or if I have my mask off? Although I feel like people ask me more than I ask it. Because I usually take my mask like the last minute if I have to like drink water or something like take my mask, drink a sip and then put it back. But I've mainly lean more towards the mask rather than social distancing because sometimes you just can't social distance really, because the space is too small. Or yeah, the space is too small so it's not really possible to search for this and so I really way more masks and well now with the vaccines. I feel like also vaccination the vaccination card, it's like the new ideas. It's fake. I feel like everybody when they see you, it's like oh yeah, I just got my third my third shot. I just got my boosters. I'm good, I'm fine. Don't worry about me or like, Don't worry, I won't get you COVID I have my third shot. But I still I still really wore masks, because I don't. I feel like in the end masks is what are keeping us safe the most.

WENDI 00:15:16

Yeah, thanks for sharing. And in general, what do you think have been the most challenging parts of life during the pandemic for you?

ARIELLE 00:15:26

Um, well, kind of going, kind of going back a little bit to, again, the possibility or the flexibility that I had before the pandemic, whereas I didn't really have to think much if I went outside, like, if I forgot my phone, it was fine. But now, now I feel I feel like every move I do is has to be planned. And I don't really feel like I have a lot of flexibility and freedom. And also, I don't really feel comfortable in most scenarios when I'm outside, because I'm always very conscious of like, Oh, what if there was like an outbreak right here right now? Where am I? Like, I don't? I don't know. I feel like I also stopped doing a lot of outside activities. And, yeah, I don't know, it's especially challenging because I think that as a society, we depended a lot on the outside and what's outside of our houses. So now that everything well, everything, I feel like nowadays, like, I don't know, you can go to movies and wear a mask, and it's fine. But most of the things that we're so used to just like having the option to do it. Now, it's not really an option. That's been challenging. And also it's been, I've been challenging myself, like, Okay, if I can go to the movies, what can I do instead of like, I'm trying to really think outside the box because of the pandemic or like, how do how do you I don't know, if you invite if I invite people over. It's like, okay, how can I make this night fun? Like, it's not really like, oh, yeah, let's get together in a bar. Like you can, people still do it, but I don't really feel comfortable doing that anymore. So yeah, I'm just like, I don't know, I'm kind of reinventing the whole social life and yeah, my own life. Taking an account all this, like moving parts that we have.

WENDI 00:17:20

Yeah. And to follow up on that. I just wanted to kind of no more detail. I have a pandemic has changed your social life. And have you had any previously in person social events that we're now held online?

ARIELLE 00:17:36

Yeah, um, well, I don't have a ton of friends to start with. In the past, I didn't really see them as frequent now with COVID, I believe, just barely see them. Um, and, yeah, so I feel like I see my friends less and less, although, because I see them in person less. I– I feel like my Zoom calls and like, my face times have increased significantly. I don't know even my dad, he also lives here in Seattle. And still, I feel like I FaceTime him like a week– at least once a week. But since I don't see him in person, it's like, okay, I'll just FaceTime you. Or I don't know, same for Christmas for Christmas. Within family. We all just did a zoom call, because we couldn't get together. Because COVID Um, so yeah, um, and I didn't um, a lot of the activities I was doing prior COVID. They were stuff that you can only do in person. Like I couldn't really move to the Zoom situation. Although, I

did take a couple I was doing, I was taking a couple of herbal medicine classes. And those ones that it was really easy to just like switch to, to zoom. But, yeah.

WENDI 00:18:59

Yeah. And so in general, how has the pandemic impacted your sense of personal well being?

ARIELLE 00:19:07

Um, well, for once, I feel like I'm overthinking more. I always I've always thought of myself as an over-thinker, but now I feel like I overthink way more. And I also feel like I lost some social interaction abilities. Like I don't, I don't really, I don't know sometimes I'm like, I don't really know how to approach this person anymore. Like, I don't know someone random would talk to me in a store and I'm like, I don't really know how to talk to you back. It's, I feel like I've been cau— I became really introverted, like really inwards and myself. And also, it really challenged my patients. I do think of myself as a patient person. But with COVID I feel like my patients just like one to a limit. And I'm really struggling, well not not as much anymore. I feel like no world like two years and so like I adjust such for quite a bit, but in the beginning, it was really hard to not to not not just like lose it, and just like, go in a swirl of anxiety and stress. But now, I don't know if like we all I don't know humans are resilient. So I feel like at this point, we all kind of figure it out our own coping mechanisms. But at the beginning of stuff, I was really anxious. And I was really stressed because I had all this plans like we all did. And we couldn't do anything. So I was like, Okay, now what, what next? Like, what can what can I do? What can what I can't do?

WENDI 00:20:42

All right, thanks for sharing. And I would like to move on to specific questions about aspects of your life that have been impacted by the pandemic. So, first of all, can you describe the economic impacts of this pandemic on you personally? For example, were you laid off last hours, extra hours or did you work overtime, etc.

ARIELLE 00:21:07

Um, during the pandemic, I think, I feel well actually. I did work way more, I was working a lot, I was working a lot, a lot of hours, maybe even a lot of overtime. So I think because I just didn't really want to think or like, [?Inaudible ?] really, really want to compel and what was happening with life, I just threw my life to work. And I was working a lot. So I didn't really have like a major economical impact. I just worked a lot. (*chuckles*)

WENDI 00:21:41

and has the pandemic, how has the pandemic impacted your ability to access food, and especially the foods that you consider a part of your culture?

ARIELLE 00:21:54

Um, well, in the beginning, it was hard, I feel if I felt like I was going on a mission every time I went to the grocery store. But now I didn't again, since for like, two years, and this whole pandemic, it just feels like it feels normal, it feels it feels a alright, it's not really hard. I don't— it's not really an issue for me to go to a grocery store. Also, I have like a grocery store, like really close to my house. So it's, it's not, it's not really an issue right now. But at the beginning, it totally felt like a mission.

WENDI 00:22:30

Yeah, and how did the pandemic impact your housing situation? So, did your housing situation feel threatened by the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:22:41

Um, yes, during the beginning of the pandemic, I had to move houses to move houses cause I was not in a good situation. And it was hard and tough because I felt so pressured and whatnot. But that was in the beginning of the epidemic. And so far, I haven't had any problems.

WENDI 00:23:07

And what about technology? So has access to technology been sufficient for you? This can include video conferencing platforms, digital devices, or internet access.

ARIELLE 00:23:17

I'm, fortunately Yes, I feel lucky. Because I have both— my partner gave me her old phone, because my phone was really old. My dad, he also gave me a computer. So I'd really I felt lucky and grateful for the people to have donated me their technology so I don't really—I haven't really had a hard time accessing internet and technological devices.

WENDI 00:23:43

Yeah, that's good to hear. And following up on that, have any other family, friends, neighbors, or even strangers helped you in any way as a result of the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:23:57

Yeah, my neighbor has quite a bit of help with me, I have a cat and oh, he's a kitty. And at the beginning, he had a lot of separation anxiety, so my neighbor would take care of him when I was out of the house. So that was a huge help. And also my partner has helped me quite a bit with the kitty situation. And other aspects too. So yeah, I will say like my neighbor, my partner and my dad has been a really big help for me during the pandemic.

WENDI 00:24:34

Okay, and is there any other points you want to mention or other aspects of the pandemic you want to discuss in relation to your personal life?

ARIELLE 00:24:50

Um, not really.

WENDI 00:24:56

Alright. And did you ever get sick or know anyone who did. So this can be COVID. This can be any other illness and what are your thoughts or feelings about that?

ARIELLE 00:25:09

Um, well my partner tested positive COVID like last week. Um, but before that, well I know well, I I'm, I'm a pretty healthy person. So from the beginning of the pandemic till now I didn't get sick. And the only person – well, my partners, the first person I actually met that got COVID cause I always heard like a friend of a friend or like the cousin of a friend or a co like a co-workers aunt or something. Like it was never like something somebody so close to me. But luckily it was really easy for us. My partner didn't really present a lot of symptoms. She was only sick for a couple of days. And then immediately she started to pick she started to feel better and I in although I did see her, and although she quarantine she isolated in my house, I haven't presented any symptoms, and I also tested negative. So yeah, it's I don't know if [?Inaudible ?] illness that I've encountered during COVID.

WENDI 00:26:17

And were you ever quarantined or no?

ARIELLE 00:26:20

Yes, yes, I also quarantine.

WENDI 00:26:24

And what has your experience of quarantine been like?

ARIELLE 00:26:27

That's weird cause, again, losing the like the freedom or the flexibility to be like, oh, yeah, I'm just gonna go outside and do my thing. And not having that and being so self conscious of like, wait, no, I'm isolating. I'm doing quarantine. It can't really go shouldn't go. It's— it's kind of weird. And then I'm just sitting like, Okay, now what do I do with my life? Should I play like a board game? Should I make a puzzle? Like, I started thinking of like, okay, what what are the things that one can do in your house? already cleaned the kitchen? Now? What? (*chuckles*) So, yeah, it's, it's, it's been interesting to kind of like reinvent, like, what are the things that one can do in your own house.

WENDI 00:27:20

All right. And the next bit of questions I'm going to ask are about the issue of race and racism during the pandemic, which, of course, has been a huge issue. So a wave of protests for the Black Lives Matter movement emerged during the spring of 2020, as a result of the murder of George Floyd. And what are your observations and thoughts regarding this movement? And how, how do you think, you know, the context of the pandemic influenced discussions on race and racism?

ARIELLE 00:28:00

Um, well, I do identify as a person of color. So I was infuriated when George Floyd was murdered. And also really disappointed. But at the same time, I was mainly sad, because we all know how corrupt and how white the system can be. So at the beginning, I was disappointed. And then I was like, Wait, we all know that. The system is very corrupt, and very white. So I shouldn't be disappointed. I knew. So when I was mainly sad. Um, and I know a lot of people went really vocal and went to the streets and whatnot. But since I'm an immigrant in the States, I can't really afford that. Because if I well, I did, I attended a couple of protests, but I wasn't really that comfortable. Cause there was sending the National Guard and everything. And I was like, well, if they caught me, then I'm getting deported. (*chuckles*) So, I can't really afford that right now. But I did try my best to engage in situation like I like either. I don't know, talking to different friends, reading a lot trying to really nurture myself with more information, and really keep on [?Inaudible ?], really follow the news and see what's happening and how ways I can help and how I don't know if I can donate here if I can donate there. But it was it was I also felt like everything happened so fast. I feel like those first weeks after George Floyd's murder was really intense. And it was really vivid. I mean, it was wild. Like every day there were protests happening. And that was also great. That gave me hope. Honestly, the fact that there was so many peoples in the streets, so many people being vocal, but also at one point, I was like, wait, we all have to wait for someone to get murdered in this kind of circumstances to make something to do something about it. Especially you white folks like why were we were waiting? Why are you waiting for this? Why did you wait for this to happen? Like, why are you suddenly woke? Like this? I don't know. It also, I don't know, it also made me pretty angry. (*chuckles*) And I don't know, because of that. I feel like it was a topic of conversation for credit. And since it was a topic of close friends and like close relatives, because I was like, "well, so he really think that the system is just like, they really think this was justice? hahaha, no". Okay, goodbye. But, um, honestly, it's race is something that it's tender for everybody. And it's interesting how tender is for everybody. And I especially think it's interesting when it comes to someone that like someone with my skin color that I'm not really I'm brown, but I'm not really that brown to the like— point like a black person, but I'm also not white. So people always get confused and how to address to me. And I think that's really interesting. Because we're so color driven. Like all our movements or actions or all our thoughts, all the words we say they're so color driven. I don't know, like people, it's really

interesting how I've seen customers talk differently to a coworker, and then when they address me, it's totally different or even supervisors. That also, I don't know, it happened a lot that I'll be working and a supervisor will grab me in a way and then a co-worker, that was white it would be addressed differently. You know, I always be like, Why were we so color driven? We should evolve, we should move past this because clearly, this is not working. Um, but yeah, I don't know, it's interesting how we just let ourselves go because of someone else brown or someone is white or whatever, just because their color of skin is different. Yeah, I really shouldn't think we should go past that. It makes no sense.

WENDI 00:32:32

Yeah. And if you're comfortable, comfortable sharing, would you mind telling me a bit more about your own experience as a person who identifies as brown and in the workplace, and any experiences which you believe that race would have to be salient? And how you experienced something?

ARIELLE 00:32:56

You know, oh, well, I've been called exotic so many times, like, Oh, your features? No, there's nothing exotic about this. Like, this is not if you live in [?Inaudible ?] just in this little tap, we're called America. That's when you but I'm excited to come online, a thrift store like in a gift store. I'm not exotic. So that really infuriates me. And I've been called out so many times that at this point, it's just kind of numbing, but in the beginning was really infuriating. And I don't know, it's at the beginning, it was really hard because I always like it. I always took all the words way too close. I always taking way too serious. But I don't know, it's hard because we all grew up in this system, right? We all grew up with this color driven system. Um, so I do understand where it comes from. But that doesn't mean that I agree with it, or that I just go with it. Um, so it was really hard for me to Okay, be like, I understand this. I understand how— why we racist. I understand why people call me exotic. And it was really hard for me to pass that to be like, Okay, I understand. And now how are we going to proceed with this? How am I going to proceed with it? It was hard for me to just be like, okay, so if someone calls me excited, I just have to stop them like that af— like that step of being okay. I'm going to start calling out people it was really hard for me because also that takes a lot of courage like, and I feel like also in a lot of like retail spaces or like grocery stores. Employees are not really allowed to speak, to speak up in a lot of workspaces. It's not really safe for an employee to speak up. So that was something challenging and something that I had in mind. Um, but it's been a journey. I'm still working on it. I'm still trying to I'm still navigating this world. But something that it's something, there's just one thing that I can never get over it is how people talk to me differently. On one hand first, because I'm brown, and then people talk to me differently. Because I'm Latina, because I'm an immigrant. This that's something that I'm really like, there's no need, like I speak English as good as you are. People will be like, Oh my god, your English is so good. And I'm like, What? What is that supposed to mean? Is that a compliment? Or? I don't know. I've also been told, like, oh my god, you barely have an accent Good on you. And I'm just like, Excuse you. It's just like, it's, it's I'm like, This is outrageous. Like, how, why? Why do you think that's okay to say like, it's, I'm good. I always wonder like, why do this people feel so entitled, and so comfortable? To say something that makes no sense? Like, I don't know, like you don't. And also, that's also really interesting, because I feel like there's this huge expectations towards immigrants and not have an accent when speaking English. But then if you see people who speak English, and they're in another country, they make zero effort of speaking the language. They're like, Oh, I speak English, you'll understand or like, oh, I'll just speak your language with English accent and you'll understand you can cope. But when you're hearing America's Oh, accent I can, I don't know what you're saying, like, oh, make an effort to actually speak English. Um, so it's been hard. It's been a journey. Um, I'm still not. I'm, like I said, I'm still working on it. But I'm, I'm getting better. And I'm getting better of calling up people and be like, hey, actually, no, I don't think it's a compliment [?Inaudible ?]. To tell me that my English is great (*chuckles*)

WENDI 00:36:55

Yeah, thanks for sharing. And I'm particularly curious about your experience as someone who has been working, you know, in a variety of contexts. So you are an artist, and in that role, you work mostly online, right. But then you're also you also have some gigs in a grocery store where you work in person. So I was wondering, what are the most significant differences you think between, you know, an online work environment, and one that's in person?

ARIELLE 00:37:36

Yeah, um, so it was a lot of customer interaction, a lot of other workers interaction. And then I quit working at PCC, because I couldn't, I couldn't have it anymore. I was dealing with a lot of mental and health issues [?Inaudible ?]. And then I started working as an artist full time. And it was— it was really calming, it was calming, because I could make my own schedule, so I can do stuff, my own rhythm. It also got pretty lonely because I was by myself for like, an entire day. So it did impact somehow it did impact a little bit and my social skills and my social like my social life, because I was alone quite a bit and I will only talk to my cat. So it was transitioning for like, a constant will not constant, but like eight hours of interactions, like legit just here on there. Like I don't know, an email exchanged for the customer like somebody like it was, it was a really tough switch of, of dynamics. And recently, I started working in this catering gig and this bookstores, packaging gig. And they're pretty, they're very different. Because in the catering is just an assembly line and we just like me food, like the frozen meals. So it's not I don't really talk with customers, I just talk with my co-workers. And that's pretty chill. I feel like anything that involves customer service. It makes things harder. (*chuckles*) Because not only you're dealing with your own work, you'll have to deal with people's emotions. And people are so entitled sometimes you don't expect it and you're like oh wow, okay, we're gonna do both let's roll with it. Um, and same with the with my other gig. I just pack books. I don't really ins— well, I also give like the curbside pickup people, I give them their stuff. It's like, oh, here's your stuff in the back. Have a good day. Bye. So my interaction with customers has decreased significant— significantly. So it's been it's been interesting adjusting to all this different dynamics something that I tell my friends a lot is that I feel like with COVID we lost our sense of stability because everything is moving and changing so fast that we don't really have a, we don't really have enough time to adjust. And I feel like in spring, it's like, oh, yeah, it's spring, it's hot, everybody, you can just go outside and be maskless. And then like actually cases going up. So no, keep your mask on. Or like, Oh, now if you're vaccinated, you can do whatever you want infinitive infinity for options, you can go into a restaurant and show your vaccination card and it's fine. And [?Inaudible ?]. It goes like Actually , no. So yeah, it's it's been a lot of changes.

WENDI 00:40:43

Yeah. And I was wondering, like, Where was your catering gig at? And like, who is your employer?

ARIELLE 00:40:54

Oh, yeah. So when I worked in grocery, it was PCC. My catering gig is this company called Westerly. They're located in Georgetown. And will I just packed books at the UW bookstore U-District.

WENDI 00:41:08

Okay. Great. And I guess my next question might be, what has surprised you about this period of time?

ARIELLE 00:41:22

Um, how naive people are, and how selfish we can be as humans. (*chuckles*) I don't know, like the beginning of the pandemic, scientists were like, Yeah, we're masking in eight weeks, we're gonna beat this virus. But now here we are, two years later, getting a third vaccine that it's not really covered. Like, it's not really protecting you from the virus, it just helps you to deal with the virus, so don't get as sick. Or maybe you just don't present any symptoms, or just how selfish we can be. I don't know a lot of people just thinking of their own what they

want to do with their lives. Yeah, how selfish we can be and how naive we can all be. We're just like, oh, this is gonna be a couple of months. This just a little virus. But no, here we are two years later.

WENDI 00:42:14

Yeah, and how do you think life will be different after the pandemic, if we really have a conception of what this after will look like?

ARIELLE 00:42:23

Um, for once, for once, I feel like COVID is gonna just become a common flow. Because I feel like that's really what we're heading towards. Because first, it was first vaccine, we got the vaccine. And now it's like, well, yeah, get your booster shot. It's like, okay, yeah, the booster show is gonna help you to like, I don't know, if you get COVID You will get sick. And now I saw that they're developing pills, like Pfizer is developing like little pills that you can take an equivalent— equivalent of the vaccine. So I'm like, okay, yeah, we're just like, going towards, we're just like, gonna transform this will put them into a common flu, it's gonna take a lot of time. Because of course, COVID Also, it's like developing with all this new strings or whatnot. But I'm not really sure how, how things are gonna look, I don't know. I feel like well, all the kids that were born in COVID. I feel like they're going to be like, kinda hygiene freaks. I don't know, I've seen so many babies just like put their hands up, like, Mommy give me like, hand sanitizer. Like, they'll put their hands up in the little, like the hand sanitizer, the sensory, it's like, I've seen kids doing it. Like, I don't know, even kids being like, when I worked in grocery, I heard so many kids being like, Mom, get your mask on. But like, what are you doing with your mask? Or like friends that are teachers they would tell me that, "yeah, I would take my mask off. And kids would be like, no, no, put your mask on. Like you can't take your mask off." So I really feel like kids are going to be really self conscious about them and their surroundings and hygiene was.

WENDI 00:42:23

Yeah, and can you reflect on any positive experiences you have – you've had in the pandemic?

ARIELLE 00:44:10

Oh, yeah. Um, well for once. um, I do think it helped me to kind of reinvent myself and understand where I'm at and where I want to do with my life. And that sounds so it was. It was really let's word illuminating to kind of be able to just like in tune with myself and see where I'm at and what I want to do and who I am and whatnot. I also will also during COVID I met my partner so that was great. (*chuckles*) Well, I got a— we got a cat so that was also great. I also I feel like also some of my relationship—relationships just they got closer and more tight and like, I don't know, they sedimented a little bit so they're more solid now. Um, especially relationships with my dad and my mom. It's like now I feel them even closer. I also feel like it's kind of weird because now they do treat me like an adult. It's like okay, now we're actually deciding to have this relationship together. And the past was like, Yeah, you're my dad. And I'm your daughter and we have a relationship and then (audio cuts off) friends. So that's great. Um, but yeah, same with some other friendships. Um, I do feel like we just got closer.

WENDI 00:45:31

Yeah, and are there any other thoughts you'd like to share or you know, what I missed that you believe is important to talk about?

ARIELLE 00:45:42

Um (*Thinking*) no, nothing comes to mind right now.

WENDI 00:45:55

All right. So it looks like we can end this interview. Now, if there's not really anything else you want to discuss in the context of this interview. So thank you so much, again for taking the time to speak with me today.

ARIELLE 00:46:15

My pleasure. Thank you.